

**Testimony  
of**

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**To**

**Subcommittee on Benefits  
Mike Simpson, Chairman  
Committee on Veterans Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
334 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515**

**June 6, 2002; 10:00 a.m.**

Partnerships, Joint Ventures, Teaming, and other similar forms of co-operational organization have always been goals of the military veterans community.

The U.S. Congress (Congress) has repeatedly been presented with pleas and demands for increased efficiency and results in veterans benefit programs, at every session of the Congress.

It is past time that the Committee on Veterans Affairs (USCVA) begins to investigate the potential for greater Veterans Service Organization (VSO) participation in the operational processes that determine the outcome of resources that affect the lives of America's veterans.

This investigation should review and analyze meaningful and participatory programs; not just the periodic policy statements that have been received by past sessions of the Congress.

The veteran stakeholder, especially the service connected disabled veteran (SDV), has every right to be an integral part of every benefit process that impacts his life and well being.

This is a right afforded our non-veteran citizens in their daily lives, but it is a limited right to those who sacrificed for the well being of our nation.

The administrations' of our government have always considered the delivery of benefits and services to our veterans to be an exclusive and arbitrary function—to be negotiated between the Congress and the federal agency.

The unique status of a veteran, especially the SDV, who has his life and quality of life, at issue, demands more veteran participation – not more and more complex formulas, rules and regulations.

Currently, the Association for Service Disabled Veterans (ASDV) is pursuing two (2) initiatives that require co-operative relationships between individual veterans, VSO's and federal agencies.

One initiative is P.L. 106-50, "THE VETERANS ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT", legislation unanimously enacted by the U.S. Congress to establish "self employment" programs wherein individual veterans and VSO's are authorized to enter into negotiated and co-operative relationships with federal agencies to advance "self employment" entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans.

This legislation is patterned after a highly successful program in effect in the State of California where ASDV sponsored the necessary legislation.

One of the secondary results of the State of California legislation are "partnership" relationships where the private sector has developed a new understanding and affinity to the needs and aspirations of SDV.

SBC Communications, a national leader in telephony and telecommunications has been the premier advocate and participant in this “self employment for service disabled veterans” initiative. SBC has awarded over \$125 millions to SDV in support of the application of self employment to rehabilitation strategies.

Another initiative is P.L. 107-35, “THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIR HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS ENHANCEMENT ACT”, legislation wherein a national emergency response capability will be established to address the vulnerability of our service disabled veterans and other “AT RISK” populations.

ASDV’S “VETERANS MOBILE MONITORING SYSTEM (VMMS)” utilizes coordinated global positioning, packet switching, 24/7 monitoring centers, and advanced communications to immediately locate a patient in distress and to define and dispatch assistance to a veteran experiencing a health crisis.

Both of these initiatives are programs calling for “REAL PARTNERSHIPS” in the operation and delivery of services to service disabled veterans.

However, it is imperative that the Congress monitor and review any initiatives continuously! Experience has demonstrated that federal agencies are reluctant to involve others in the operation of their “turf”.

Agencies have frequently cited the inability to establish performance requirements and the lack of enforceable accountability as two of the primary reasons for stakeholder participation.

These are not barriers that cannot be overcome. There are many innovative ways to insure the conduct and operations of even the most sensitive of programs.

The Committee is to be commended for its interest and concern for increased efficiency in veterans' programs.

ASDV, as well as other VSO, stand ready to participate in any effort to commission "partnership initiatives".